

Team Cherry interview with Pixels Rising (2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uPP65r3Dtl>

Interviewer: Chell

Guests: William Pellen, Ari Gibson and Dave Kazi

0:01 Chell: Welcome to Pixels Rising, Radio Adelaide's on-air video game program, where we take a close look at the local Australian and Adelaide video game industries, as well as promote local gaming communities and events. Today we are joined by William Pellen, Ari Gibson, and David Kazi, the game developers from the Adelaide based indie games team, Team Cherry. And they're here to talk to us about their experiences, and their upcoming 2D action-adventure platformer, Hollow Knight. Thanks for joining us on the show today.

0:28 William Pellen, Ari Gibson, David Kazi: Yeah, yes. Cheers. It is good to be here.

0:31 Chell: So let's just kick off about talking about you guys, your first gaming experiences and how you got into the industry. So what got you all into games originally?

0:40 William Pellen: Oh, man. I remember when I was a kid, one of the first games I played was probably the original Mario Brothers and like Bart vs. the Space Mutants, which was also a great game. And I remember when I was a kid in primary school, I used to spend a lot of time drawing imaginary video game levels, or like bosses and spells and things. So that's when I got interested in it.

1:01 Ari Gibson: I think I had a similar beginning, drawing video game levels. I was deprived of video game console for a long time as a child. And I think that probably made it more enticing. So when we finally got a Nintendo Entertainment System, it became doubly exciting.

1:21 David Kazi: It's good. So I'd say probably quite different thing for me. I started way back on the Commodore 64, probably about age seven, which did require a lot of programming to get working as well. And then grew up in the golden age of

adventure games on PC. And some console gaming on the PS1. So been there as long as I could remember.

1:45 Chell: Do you guys reckon that those have influenced how you interact with games now and what you'd like to create?

1:51 Ari Gibson: Yeah, definitely. I think, in fact, this game Hollow Knight is probably closely related to those earlier titles that we played. It's definitely taking a lot of its design from earlier Nintendo games like Zelda, the original, Zelda II specifically and Metroid, things like that. More so than it is maybe from contemporary games also in the difficulty.

2:19 Chell: What do you guys like to play now?

2:23 William Pellen: A range of stuff. We've all got, I mean, I've got a few consoles, got like Wii U, PS3 and stuff. I've got Steam as well. Play a lot of games on there. Just recently, I played through Hyper Light Drifter, which is another like a pretty big indie game, just came out recently, which is really good, I smashed through it over a weekend. Yeah, just a broad range of stuff. Although these days now, when I'm playing, I tend to pay more attention to if there are any good ideas we could potentially steal.

2:51 Ari Gibson: Yeah, we all seem to have had a fairly broad history of video games, which seems to have benefited our game. It seems to be very common, especially with some of the students, the game development students we talk to these days, that they have a narrower range of games that they draw from. So a lot of them come up or coming up playing, say just Dota. So Dota 2, which is sort of a strange, abstract kind of game that a lot of people are into. But because we try and experience games very broadly, and lots of different genres, it does make problem solving a lot easier. And we can pull all sorts of different, like William says, steal, steal the best from all the different genres.

3:34 William Pellen: Because you build up like a vocabulary of stuff.

3:38 Chell: That's a bit of about your history with games. What's your history, personally, with game development? How did you get into that?

3:45 William Pellen: I always did it as like a hobby, just for fun. I never, I mean, back when I was coming up in school, and then when I was at TAFE doing because I've come from a web design background. You know, doing indie games and stuff wasn't such a realistic thing. So I mean, I never really even considered doing it as a career. I always just did it on the side, made my own stuff, made like sort of really big sprawling games and then abandoned them when I got tired of them, moved on to something else. And then eventually we... Ari got in contact with me. Well, Ari and I, we already knew each other. We were old friends. So I did like a few game jams for fun. And then after the game jams, we moved on to doing the Hollow Knight project. So that was kind of the throughline there for me.

4:32 Ari Gibson: And I've worked in animation for the last ten years or so. So as a result of that I've worked on a bunch of titles, lots of, say Xbox 360 and PlayStation.

4:49 David Kazi: Is that De Blob you worked on?

4:50 Ari Gibson: That was one. I worked on a lot of like Wii titles that are better left forgotten.

4:56 David Kazi: You're not talking about De Blob there though because that was alright.

5:00 Ari Gibson: No, no, that one was alright. But some other stuff. If you want to play some sort of Avatar, Airbender game, Transformers games. And I think I worked on a Megamind game once. You remember that, remember that weird blue CG thing.

5:13 William Pellen: Yeah. That CG thing.

5:14 Ari Gibson: Hellboy game, I don't know, a bunch of stuff, just as a result of being an animator and...

5:23 William Pellen: And this is for the inbuilt cut scenes, stuff like FMVs or...

5:25 Ari Gibson: Yeah, primarily cut scene stuff, sometimes a bit of level building, it was all fairly random hodgepodge of things, I should say, because I'm primarily the artist on Hollow Knight and that was a fairly natural progression.

5:42 David Kazi: And for myself, I had been doing some... I started doing a computer science degree, and came out of that. I did a lot of work on web and systems analysis, and it's actually quite non game related stuff. But the passion was always there. And I'd say probably since the advent of Unity, the Unity game engine specifically, that rekindled that fire and I was able to do sort of small games in my own time for fun, and that spurred on all of this development. And then when I found out these guys were tackling a larger project and they wanted to move to Unity, I couldn't resist. So then here we are.

6:22 Chell: You mentioned that Hollow Knight sort of originated from a game jam. So that's kind of where your team is rooted isn't it? What's your been your experience with game jams?

6:32 William Pellen: Yeah it's been really good. Yeah, we've been, we've actually only managed to do a couple. We felt a bit bad because we've actually we've missed a lot of game jams that have come and gone during the project. And each time we kind of talked about the idea of maybe joining in, but we just got too much to do.

6:49 David Kazi: Yeah, the temptation is always there. Oddly enough, I've never actually been to one yet. So I've seen, you know, some of the works there, but it just never came together. So...

6:58 Ari Gibson: This game is an extension, the direct extension of a one game jam, a Ludum Dare with the and the theme for that was beneath the surface. So hence the underground bug kingdom. But we sort of went beyond what was capable in 48 hours or 72 hours. And here we are.

7:20 William Pellen: Two years later. It's a really long... this is an extended Game Jam.

7:26 Chell: Extended Game Jam?

7:27 David Kazi: Yeah, basically just started and never stopped.

7:29 William Pellen: The character from Hollow Knight is actually from the very first game jam that Ari and I did with another friend of ours, Rohan and the game was called The Hungry Knight. And it was pretty much the same character. Almost the same sprite.

7:42 Ari Gibson: It is the same sprite ripped out for this game.

7:45 David Kazi: The spirit is still there.

7:47 William Pellen: Yeah, you went around eating cherries in that game, which is why the company is called Team Cherry.

7:52 Chell: Oh, there we have it. The origin story.

7:54 William Pellen: Yeah, that's it. Yeah. And in the new game, he doesn't eat cherries anymore. So we just call him Hollow Knight.

8:00 Chell: Well, what aspects of the game have been carried over from Hungry Knight?

8:04 William Pellen: Just the character really, even the universe it was in changed a lot.

8:08 Ari Gibson: Yeah, that's true, really it was just the character.

8:10 William Pellen: It was like a top down game. So pretty different. The theme for that one was ten seconds. That was another Ludum Dare, I think. So the idea was that you have to eat cherries every ten seconds or you die, and you have to resurrect your skeleton friend. And then yeah, because I remember after that we'd finished with it. But Ari kept was sketching ideas for like bringing that character... cuz you really liked the character and wanted to bring it into like a weird, buggy world. So then when this other Ludum Dare came up, and the thing was beneath the surface, we decided to go from the top down Hungry Knight game to like a cool underground, cavern spelunking, Metroid-y type game for Hollow Knight.

8:51 Chell: Back to the structure of the team for a second, can you just tell me about the team dynamic and how you each contribute?

9:00 Ari Gibson: Sure. How do we contribute? I contribute.

9:03 David Kazi: We stand around in a circle in the morning argue until about 10 o'clock and then get to work. So...

9:10 Ari Gibson: Sometimes we do some actual work as well.

9:12 David Kazi: Yeah. That's right.

9:13 Ari Gibson: Yeah, like I think I mentioned previously so I do the animation, that kind of thing. And William here is...

9:21 William Pellen: Designer, I guess, which is things like enemy behaviors, overall game design. Yeah, like encounter design, interactive objects, that type of thing.

9:36 David Kazi: Yeah, and then a lot of the structural programming and a lot of the tools as well to build the game is generally what I do. So it's primarily all programming specific. Anything the guys need to get the job done. I can jump on and work on that.

9:51 Ari Gibson: There's probably, because it's such a small team, there's quite a bit of crossover in what we're all doing. And so William didn't mention it, but he's also had a background in animation and art himself. And so he can he's obviously he's contributing a lot of the in game, say, motion and effects and all that kind of stuff and timing out a lot of the work that I do.

10:14 William Pellen: Yeah, and I mean, the others are obviously involved with design as well and the shape of the world. So even though we've kind of given ourselves those titles, because those are like primary jobs. With just the three of us, we're sort of all in and out of all the stuff that's involved.

10:29 David Kazi: And that overlap is really good to have as well. I think that's, that's, that's really important for the team.

10:34 William Pellen: Yeah, it's nice, not having to hyper specialize. Be the guy who does particle effects for like two or three years.

10:42 Ari Gibson: That will drive you insane.

10:43 David Kazi, William Pellen: Yeah.

10:44 Chell: And like you said, you can do that because you're a small team.

10:47 Ari Gibson: Yeah, well it's one of the best things about being a small team is that one day you're animating some weird blob character and the next you're building levels or editing videos, or whatever else is needed.

11:02 David Kazi: And explaining things between us as well. As you know, getting the message across is a lot easier as well, because we each have a bit of an understanding. So that definitely goes a long way.

11:13 Chell: You're listening to Pixels Rising on Radio Adelaide. I'm Chell and right now we're talking to local game development team, Team Cherry. Right now, the big news for the team is of course, the development of the game Hollow Knight, which is their first commercial project. For our listeners' sake, could you guys just explain what the Hollow Knight is?

11:33 William Pellen: Yeah. It's 2D action-adventure platformer game.

11:42 Ari Gibson: It's got a lot of bugs in it. It's a vast interconnected insect world. And you, as the Hollow Knight, enter it, and you go down into a series of caverns which is this old ruined kingdom. You fight strange enemies. You will meet weird other bugs. And potentially you solve some sort of mystery that we shouldn't reveal.

12:09 William Pellen: Yeah, cause we haven't come up with it yet.

12:11 David Kazi: Yeah, we have, we have. Yeah, it's all planned but in advance.

12:13 Ari Gibson: Well, of course, everything's, like, set in stone.

12:15 William Pellen: We've got an extensive lore document back at the office. Yeah, the big idea of the game is that you are sort of exploring this really old, sort of destroyed insect kingdom that's now got this kind of plague thing going throughout or some kind of sickness. And we sort of we put you in there and going to ask you to start spelunking, and looking for all the different areas, looking for clues about where to go. You get new power ups as you go along, which open up new areas. We've put a lot of work into like hiding lots of kinds of weird characters to meet in there as well, like a lot of them are like pretty well hidden away. You know, you might hear someone singing as you go through the caverns, then you go and find them and talk to them. Or you might break a wall, you know, that you've gone past a hundred times and suddenly find that it's some weird, giant, grotesque creature that we put there, because we thought it looked funny.

13:07 Ari Gibson: Yeah, that's true.

13:08 William Pellen: That type of thing.

13:10 Ari Gibson: There's a general theme of it being kind of stupid. So as much as it presents maybe as atmospheric and a little bit dark, visually it just tends to get dumber. The more you get into it, the enemies get weirder. And...

13:24 William Pellen: We put sillier and sillier stuff into it.

13:26 Ari Gibson: Yeah, it's probably it's actually it's probably a reflection of us designing the game, which is that maybe when we started, we thought this is going to be a moody serious piece. But then...

13:35 David Kazi: We slowly lost our sanity along the way.

13:37 William Pellen: I was about to say, maybe it's cuz if you work on something for long enough, you just want to start putting in sillier, sillier stuff.

13:41 Ari Gibson: Yeah, you just can't keep a straight face for that long.

13:44 Chell: Well, actually, my next question was that commenting that you've received a lot of praise for the art style and the mood in particular, which is absolutely gorgeous, I do have to say. So that's interesting that you said that. But initially, right off the bat, what were you aiming for with that atmosphere? Are you trying to evoke...

14:03 Ari Gibson: What we were aiming for, artistically we're aiming for something that was quick to produce. And it just fortunately happened to have an atmospheric quality.

14:09 William Pellen: Monotone.

14:11 Ari Gibson: Yeah.

14:12 William Pellen: Monochrome.

14:12 Ari Gibson: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So it was kind of it was sort of monochrome. It was all just washed in blue. There are more colors now. So get ready for them. But not that many more. And there's also a lot of black. So largely, it was just what I could produce in 48 hours. And then we extrapolated it into two years of game.

14:35 William Pellen: Yeah. I mean, even the gameplay, it followed the same sort of idea in that. It started off as just a really simple character that could jump, dash, slash, and they had like a really simple sort of old school style gravity to it, partly because I mean, like we said before, we're sort of... we grew up with that type of game, but also because it's just way easier for us to make. And because we've sort of... It's interesting because we've been forced to start with simple ideas in a lot of aspects of the game, so the art, the design, the gameplay, that type of thing. It's got that kind of like a kind of solid foundation.

15:15 Ari Gibson: Yeah, that's true. It removes a lot of the risk as well. If you're doing something that is very innovative or something that's experimental, then there's always a chance that people aren't going to respond to it. And we have a lot of these

successful touchstones in older games that we're basically just riffing on. So we know we have a fairly decent idea that people will respond well to it.

15:36 Chell: Having said that, what do you think sets the game apart from other 2D platformers?

15:44 Ari Gibson: Bugs. Lots of bugs.

15:46 David Kazi: The non-technical type of bugs that is.

15:49 Ari Gibson: Yeah, some of them as well, though. What else sets it apart? Well, it's interesting, because largely, it's a refinement on a lot of that successful past games. But it's also a bit of an amalgamation of some of them. So...

16:04 William Pellen: Yeah, I mean, we just sort of started from kind of copying, not copying, but just like, like I said, building on some of the older games that we knew. But then, as you continue, obviously, you start to add sort of more modern refinements and stuff like that.. And the other thing I sort of touched on was that we've put a really, or we tried to put a really big emphasis on the character of the world and the actual characters themselves. So we put a lot of effort into making it like a cohesive kingdom with its own history and lots of like, a lot of like weird NPCs to meet. And we put effort into putting heaps and heaps of different enemies in there as well. Some of which are like barely even used for a couple of rooms for the effort we put into them. But there's only one of the big ideas is that there's a lot to explore and a lot to find for yourself if you dig through, which maybe not is it's not a massive thing to set it apart. But it's one of the kind of underlying things with the game.

16:58 Chell: Big Question. Do you have a favorite character or favorite little feature of the game?

17:03 Ari Gibson: I have a favorite character, which is a boss, and he's called the Dung Defender. So maybe the name suggests what he is. But I just quite like his design. And then the battle is currently obscenely difficult.

17:19 William Pellen: Yeah. Ari was fighting him the other day and asked me to turn it down. Because I played it and it really was ridiculous.

17:24 Ari Gibson: So but yeah, he was quite enjoyable. And then we also came up with a clever way that you get to chat to him afterwards. So he gets humanized or characterized by bug-inized whatever that is.

17:39 David Kazi: I think one of mine would be an NPC you encounter along the way called Zote, who is just a very, very interesting character and thinks very highly of himself, but never actually can execute on any of that. And I think just the encounters along the way, really, really do shape him up to be quite a humorous character.

18:02 William Pellen: Yeah, I was gonna say so as well. That's cool. Yeah, it's funny because Zote is like, to go into a bit of his creative backstory. He's basically a crap version of the Hollow Knight. I remember Ari and I were talking about something else. And I was doodling on a bit of paper and do like a sort of stupid version of the Hollow Knight who had like a trapezoid head and all like cracks in him. And like misshaped horns. I was like, yeah, this is have a rubbish version, that you sort of meet along the way. In terms of features, seeing as Dave stole my character, one thing we added really early on, and it's actually a really small thing that I forget we even put in there, but we can bounce off the heads of enemies. And I remember early on, you couldn't do that. And in that one tiny addition changed the game heaps for me. It feels really good. I think we've put a lot of effort into making the character, the main character, the Knight feel really good to move around. And like being able to like jump, bounce off an enemy, dash to the next dude, bounce off of him, jump off a wall, feels really good.

19:04 Ari Gibson: Part of the satisfaction in that has to be that there's a skill element, which is that you have to slash on the head of enemies, which may seem like a minor thing, but because it becomes an active...

19:14 William Pellen: You actually have to time.

19:16 Ari Gibson: Yeah, timing. Timing based skill. It ends up being constantly enjoyable.

19:21 Chell: What was the inspiration behind world building the Bug Kingdom setting, and also incorporating the dream aspect. There was something I found particularly interesting.

19:31 Ari Gibson: The Dream Aspect was, I was talking to a programmer friend of ours who's making another game called Ghosts on which is a similar sort of genre and looks very impressive. During the game, so yeah, and we were showing him our Kickstarter, because this started this actually began as a successful sort of Kickstarter post the game jam and we showed him the mock up pre release, pre launching it. And his comment was, oh, well, probably what a lot of people say, well, what's the... It looks great, but you need something different.

20:04 William Pellen: A hook.

20:05 Ari Gibson: Yeah, his suggestion was a pet which ended up in the game in a way anyway. But at the time, what we sort of decided was to incorporate like a dream element and going into the heads of enemies and friends. So that sounds like a bit of a cynical reason for incorporating...

20:25 William Pellen: We tried to come up with a unique selling point and that's it.

20:27 Ari Gibson: Yeah, that is it. But ultimately, maybe like our interest was, it has always just been in creating this kingdom that really has a lot of entertaining things to explore. And that gave us another way to explore the characters: another level of it.

20:41 Chell: How would the bug bit... How did the bug kingdom come about?

20:42 William Pellen: The game jam was sort of bug themed. Yeah, I mean, originally where we talked about it, I remember because I found the old, the original file for it, and it's called Bug's Night or something. And the idea was that they're all going to be bugs. And then they became those abstract masked guys.

20:58 Ari Gibson: That's true. I think the actual reason that they're bugs is, when you're doing a game jam, there's, there's this conscious idea that you have to make

things small, because that's what you can achieve. So and insects are inherently small, right? So you just keep coming back to them, because they're small characters.

21:14 William Pellen: Simple as well.

21:15 Ari Gibson: And you can create, yeah, you can create a very simple icon that looks like an insect with just two little lines for antennas.

21:20 William Pellen: And limbs as well, they have to do hands or anything. They can get away with that nice and easily.

21:24 David Kazi: They tend to be more rigid. So imagine there'd be easier to animate as well.

21:29 Ari Gibson: I'm sure that's all part of it.

21:31 Chell: Well, what was cool, because when I first came across the setting, I was like, how has nobody already done this? There was this element of, its original by virtue of it being something that should have been done, but it just hadn't been done.

21:43 Ari Gibson: Yeah, sure. We quite like how it ended up. But definitely it came about because of creative restrictions. Thanks to Game Jam.

21:50 William Pellen: It is a really good thing. It makes it really easy to come up with enemies and you know, and then it I mean, it makes it easy to come up with interesting set pieces as well because you think of things like, you know, we might do a temple or something, but then you think, well, what does a bug even worship? And what does... I mean what do they sit on? What do they eat, and what did their weapons look like? And that, you know, it leads into like a lot of interesting ideas. So it's actually pretty fertile like that.

22:15 Chell: You've already mentioned the Kickstarter, Ari, but that's yeah, I have to say congratulations on the massive success for that. How did you feel about the whole reception and the whole process?

22:26 William Pellen: Yeah, it was good. Because we'd been working, Ari and I've been working on the game, I don't know, four months, maybe. It's like a side thing.

22:37 Ari Gibson: And in a different engine as well. So it was more like it was in Stencyl, which was a bit of a smaller engine. So the scale of the game was also smaller at that time.

22:44 William Pellen: Yeah, it's basically a prototype. And then we sort of started talking about bringing it to Kickstarter. And I mean, I think Ari was always fairly confident. I never really had any idea of whether it was going to get through or not. So I was super stressed out for the first few nights. But yeah, I mean, it's been good. Like all the responses we've had from people who've seen it and have played it and stuff, it's been really nice and really good. And Kickstarter is really good as well, because I mean, win or lose, even if, I mean, if you crash and burn, it's not great. But if even if you don't hit your target, you start to build up, like a lot of like press and marketing and like a kind of a loyal following. So it's a really good way to sort of start off the whole process.

23:27 Chell: You've definitely built up a very well deserved loyal following. Can you just talk about some of that press attention and media attention you've received?

23:35 Ari Gibson: Yeah, well, generally, it's been great. And like William said, a lot of it has come about through the Kickstarter initially. So just because it was on Kickstarter, it had visibility. And then obviously, it attracted enough journalists and press that we ended up getting several contacts through that, that we've continued. That's been really good. It's been... probably the issue in terms of getting it to press has been finding an angle. So like the earlier questions like, what is unique about it. And the artistic thing helps initially, being this bug kingdom and the fact that not a lot of people seem to have done bug kingdoms. Let people get onto it. And that seems to have continued. So we're at PAX, as part of an indie showcase. This is the Australian PAX, October, late of last year. And we ended up getting to talk directly to a lot of those press contacts and new ones through that. So for us, at least, it's actually been quite easy. Or I shouldn't... No it's not easy. But it we've been quite successful in reaching out to press and having them respond and say, yeah, we're interested in the game. And keep us in the loop about it.

24:50 David Kazi: Yeah, they've been very welcoming, actually. It's good to see.

24:54 Chell: That's great.

24:55 Ari Gibson: Except for one guy.

24:56 Ari Gibson, William Pellen, David Kazi: Ha ha.

24:59 Chell: There is a story there.

25:00 Ari Gibson: It is a story.

25:04 Chell: Well, it was really great to see you guys get this Steam Greenlight and see you in the Nintendo Direct as well.

25:10 William Pellen: Yeah, cheers. That was really cool.

25:12 Ari Gibson: Yeah actually, they've been really nice to us as well, because Nintendo came to us first through the Kickstarter. And we've had a good relationship with them ever since.

25:24 Chell: On your Kickstarter, there was one part that really intrigued me. You had a pretty cool pledge reward early on for backers to actually be able to design part of the game to be able to have that input. So what was that process like? And whose idea was it to include that?

25:40 William Pellen: It was actually, I mean, we included in the Kickstarter, because it's actually kind of a standard thing that other games have done. Although, now that we've looked back, it seems like a lot of the other games have included some of the backer stuff in like a smaller capacity than we are, because a lot of our backer stuff has actually ended up as fairly large parts of the game.

25:56 Ari Gibson: Which is interesting in a way.

25:58 William Pellen: Yeah, its cool.

26:01 Ari Gibson: So there has been in other games that have been successful and have released through Kickstarter, there's sometimes been complaints around the backer content not being cohesive with the game world itself. So sometimes it can take you out of it, if you meet an NPC that are backers created, and it's not really consistent with the characters of your world. But we've put extra special attention on making sure that all of the characters that the backers have helped us create are really integrated and feel like part of it. So you never get taken out of it. And hopefully, that also is really satisfying for them because they feel like they're actually contributing to the greater whole rather than feeling like their characters, and their areas are just bolted on.

26:48 Chell: If you were to do it all again, is there anything you would change about the development process?

26:55 William Pellen: I don't know. I mean, it is hard to say any big overall things and we've learned a lot, so if we want, once we do it again, yeah, and we are looking to do sort of, hopefully post Hollow Knight. Got some ideas for new projects. So things will go faster. Probably going... I don't know.

27:14 David Kazi: No single standout thing. I think, I guess, as from my perspective, one thing would be excellent is to have a lot more tools available. We really did start from scratch with this project. So we had to really take on not just building the game itself, but building a whole bunch of tools for it as well. And some of those we can recycle. But having a new set as well, ready to go is definitely something we invest more time in potentially if we could.

27:38 William Pellen: We did lose a lot of time as well at the start, because like Ari said, we made the prototype of the game and we started working on the game in like a completely different engine, like a smaller one that was... That was actually quite a good one. But it's kind of more suitable for like small Game Jam games. So then we had to like, take out all of that stuff and put into Unity. So we lost a little bit of time there. But again, not too much time.

28:03 Chell: You mentioned future games and projects you are planning to work on. Yeah, so let's talk about the future of Team Cherry. Is there anything concrete?

28:12 Ari Gibson: We have a karaoke boat game. Yeah, looks like it could be quite entertaining. So whether it gets made or not.

28:19 William Pellen: Is that the same one as the spaceship one with a giant cookie?

28:21 Ari Gibson: No, no. That's the top down shooter slash home decoration.

28:26 David Kazi: That's right. Yeah.

28:27 William Pellen: Yeah. We've got a whole whiteboard of these.

28:30 Ari Gibson: We haven't, we certainly have no problem coming up with ideas that entertain us and seem like they would make absurd games. But yeah, maybe a four player co-op game where you get to sail around and collect sea shanties, and sing along with a little nice karaoke style bouncing ball at the bottom as you go, and also go on adventures on little islands.

28:53 Chell: Sounds like some pretty cool stuff is in the works.

28:56 Ari Gibson: Yeah, I hope I haven't revealed too much. A brilliant game idea.

29:00 William Pellen: That's our Hollow Knight DLC down the drain. Surprise ruined.

29:05 Chell: You created another jam game a while ago, the platformer, Tomb Cat. Is there any chance that's going to be developed further?

29:13 Ari Gibson: William?

29:14 William Pellen: Well...

29:15 Ari Gibson: There was a sad thing about Tomb Cat, which is we actually thought it was pretty good. And in the 72 hours that we did the jam, William managed to get a nice high school system in. It took place around the world could compete for score. And then that the scoreboards got taken down. So probably the major appeal of the game is now lost, because...

29:35 William Pellen: Until we make the sequel.

29:36 Ari Gibson: Yeah, until we make the sequel, there's no real scores to compete with.

29:42 Chell: Are you guys gonna be showcasing at any conventions this year?

29:47 William Pellen: I don't know. We sort of talked a bit about it. We're not sure. It's hard, because I mean, obviously, we're so busy. And like conventions and stuff take a lot of time to set up for and go for. Do a lot of fun. And yeah, it's really cool, many people and watching them playing the game and talking to press. But yeah, we're not sure actually to make the decisions.

30:08 Ari Gibson: Maybe around release or just post release, conventions would come back onto the agenda.

30:11 William Pellen: That's true. We're not feeling the stress of... development so much.

30:15 Ari Gibson: Right now, we just looking at lists of hundreds of bugs, and feel the pressure of getting them all fixed.

30:21 Chell: Well, you're pretty close to releasing the game now. Any new updates on when that's definitively going to be?

30:27 Ari Gibson: I should say, no. We're a little vague ourselves, which is just that we don't want to set a date, until we're sure we can hit it. Because we'd much rather be clear that we're not exactly sure when that's going to be other than it's coming closer.

30:45 William Pellen: We have set a few vague dates, and we've gone past them each time.

30:48 David Kazi: It's probably more quality centric, I'd say that we want to achieve a certain level of quality rather than commit to just the time spent.

30:54 Ari Gibson: Yeah that's true, and it can be very frustrating for backers and other people who are interested in buying the product if you do set a date, and then just miss it and then miss it again.

31:04 William Pellen: It's tricky as well. I mean, this is our first. I mean, we've all worked a little bit in game development. But this is our first big project together. And we're sort of consistently surprised at how long stuff takes to do. Yeah, there's a lot to do. So it's hard to sort of give a concrete endpoint.

31:23 Ari Gibson: Although saying that, I think we're doing pretty well in terms of genre. So a lot of the other, this genre is vaguely called Metroidvania. But a lot of other titles, which are very successful in that area have development schedules of three to five years. So if we're able to achieve that within two, and with three people on the team, we're doing all right.

31:47 Chell: Do you have any advice for Adelaide developers who are trying to get their indie games out there?

31:53 Ari Gibson: Keep them simple maybe.

31:55 David Kazi: Yeah.

31:56 Ari Gibson: We didn't, but we're suffering for it. Well, we're enjoying it. But yeah, you can certainly you can make a commercial game now that is not overly complicated. And there's definitely a niche for smaller products. I do think that the artistically it's been very successful in terms of being able to produce art quickly. So that was a good thing. I have a general stance and I think William certainly agrees, potentially Dave as well, that as a small developer going into 3D, so making a 3D game can destroy any chance of releasing product because... And we read it. We've been reading these post mortem sort of articles ever since we'd started

development of small studios who try and make the shift into 3D and it all just collapses. They just... the amount of complexity that is added, the minute the game is in 3D is just much much much more than anyone seems to be able to.

32:59 David Kazi: Yeah, definitely don't underestimate that.

33:02 William Pellen: One Indie thing that seems to be seems to be pretty successful, it's just think of an old game you really liked and that people liked, but that doesn't really exist anymore.

33:08 Ari Gibson: Yeah.

33:09 William Pellen: And just remake that and then add some stuff to it. And bing bang boom, you're done.

33:16 Chell: Do you guys have any final words to our listeners?

33:20 Ari Gibson: Final words.

33:21 William Pellen: Please pre-order Hollow Knight.

33:24 David Kazi: Yeah, actually if you are interested in Hollow Knight, if people are interested in checking out Hollow Knight they can go to HollowKnight.com. Or follow our blog on teamcherry.com.au.

33:34 William Pellen: Actually, if presumably, most people listening will be in Adelaide or but if you are, show us what you're working on, if you are in Adelaide in the game developer because we are really interested seeing other stuff. Actually, there is like a Facebook group that I follow as well. ARG?

33:50 Chell: Oh, yeah.

33:51 William Pellen: It is. Yeah. So people post stuff on there all the time. It's really interesting to see what people are doing.

33:57 Chell: Well, I'm sure people will be interested because the game honestly looks incredible. And I am super excited for it. You can pre order a digital copy of Hollow Knight now on the game website HollowKnight.com for PC, MacOS and Linux. There are also bundles available which include the soundtrack, comic, world map and beta access for PC. The game will also be released on the Wii U. As the team has said you can follow the game updates and developer news on Team Cherry's Facebook, Twitter or website. Once again, thank you so much for joining us today, William, Ari, and Dave.

34:31 Ari Gibson: Thanks very much.

34:32 David Kazi: Thanks for having us.

34:33 William Pellen: Yeah, cheers. I'm good.

34:34 Chell: This has been Chell with Pixels Rising. We are Radio Adelaide's on air video game program. And you can listen in to the show every Wednesday night from 11:30 PM online digital and at 101.5 FM.

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